

Please note the new partnership on this research as it becomes the RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey. I am privileged to have joined the outstanding faculty at Syracuse. That's the name you'll see on the research from here on ... and that's what you'll see on the painfully long survey questionnaire later this fall.

Bob Papper

Radio vs Newspaper? by Bob Papper

Another new question in this year's RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey asked radio news directors and general managers whether they view the local newspaper as competition for audience. Why or why not.

Nearly three-quarters (71.5%) of radio news directors and general managers said no, they don't view newspapers as competition. Exactly two-thirds of commercial radio managers said no, and nearly 80% (79.4%) of non-commercial managers said no. Generally, the bigger the news staff, the more likely for the manager to see the paper as competition. The number of stations in the local cluster didn't matter, and market size was inconsistent. For whatever reason, managers in the South were less likely to view newspapers as competition than managers elsewhere.

Overall, TV news directors split down the middle on the question.

Radio news directors and general managers had plenty of answers for why newspapers were and were not competition for audience.

For those who felt newspapers were competitors, the top answer, at 39.8%, was that they both compete for news and content. 17.5% said they compete on the digital side, and 15.5% noted that they compete for advertising on the business side. 11.7% said anybody who does news is a competitor, and 8.7% said newspaper is how most people get most of their news. 2.9% said they compete, but less so than in the past, and the same percentage said they're news partners or owned by the same company. One person noted that they compete for an audience's time.

In their own words:

- Both entities sell advertising to the same local businesses.
- Everything is competing for audience.
- It's one of the few other sources for local news
- More of a yes and no. They aren't competition for our broadcast audience but are for our digital audience
- The competition has shifted to the web, the battleground is Facebook.
- The newspaper still attends many of the same meetings and covers much of the same stories in depth.

- They have a larger staff and can cover more local news.
- We are both trying to cover the most important news in our region. Listeners/readers have limited time and so we are both vying for some part of that time. I do know that we have audiences that don't overlap, and we are definitely trying to gain more of their reading audience as listeners and as readers/consumer of our digital offerings.
- With digital platforms, all news outlets are potential competition

For those who felt newspaper and their radio station didn't compete, the top choice, at 34.2%, was that the paper was weak or getting weaker, only publishes once or twice a week – in many cases down from what had been a daily. Another 3.1% said their local paper was either dying or had, literally, ceased publication. At 19.6%, news directors and general managers said the media reached different audiences ... and, in a tie, that there was plenty of room for both media. Just behind those two, at 19.1%, came the response that the radio station and newspaper either had a partnership (most common) or had common ownership. 4% said they had different content; one noted they had different business models.

In their own words:

- Because we have a very large listening area, we have a regional, not strictly local, focus. Plus, the local papers are mostly just not very good.
- Both have their place in today's market. Radio can give a brief synopsis of current events. Newspapers can go more in depth. Readers or listeners have the choice.
- For advertising, yes. But the paper recently dropped from 5 days a week to twice a week.
- From our audience research, we know that the majority of our audience does not subscribe to a newspaper. That's sad of course.
- I actually don't [see the newspaper as competition] ... but the newspaper sees us as competition.
- I have 20-30 seconds to tell my story. The paper can devote a section to it. I see us complimenting each other.
- It only prints twice a week. So the newspaper news runs days after it actually happens.
- It only comes out once a week; it's old news by the time that happens
- Not very many people even read the newspaper anymore
- People will always turn to a newspaper if they are looking for news. Our stations are music first, news second
- Radio is a headline industry. We provide the headlines in an immediate fashion. When someone wants extra details and background information they turn to the newspaper. It is a different philosophy reporting the same stories so our audience differs.
- The local newspaper is run by the same company.
- The local paper now has drastically cut staff. It has only 1 fulltime news reporter and 2 fulltime sports reporters.
- The newspaper has been gutted. Sale of the paper, new ownership, in the process of ceasing a printed newspaper product to go digital only. RIP.

- The newspaper has dropped most of its local coverage
- The two newspapers come out twice a week and once a week, respectively. We're on every weekday.
- There's a complete dearth of news gathering infrastructure here. The paper is the only game in town for 90% of stories. We generally just read articles from them.
- They publish only two days a week now, we can now ALWAYS get the news on the air before they print it, even if we are a day late.
- We are in a cooperative partnership agreement with the local daily.
- We own the local newspaper; we work together

About the Survey

The RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey, funded in part by the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication at Hofstra University, was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2019 among all 1,702 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,427 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,313 television stations (77.1%) and 673 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,996 radio stations. Some data sets (e.g. the number of TV stations originating local news, getting it from others and women TV news directors) are based on a complete census and are not projected from a smaller sample.

About Bob Papper

Bob Papper is Adjunct Professor of Broadcast and Digital Journalism at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news.